

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

Claims 1-23 (canceled).

Claim 24 (currently amended): A lower terminal end-piece for a fuel assembly of a pressurized water nuclear reactor, the assembly comprising fuel rods having a length and a diameter, and a skeleton for supporting the fuel rods, the fuel rods extending in a longitudinal direction and being arranged at nodes of a substantially regular network, the fuel rods having outer claddings closed by an upper and a lower plug, the support skeleton comprising ~~two terminal end-pieces, an upper terminal end piece and the lower terminal end piece,~~ and guide tubes that connect the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, the fuel rods being arranged longitudinally between the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, the lower terminal end piece comprising:

~~an inner and an outer side, the inner side a top side and a bottom side, the top side~~ for facing the fuel rods and the bottom side-outer side being opposite the top side-inner side;

noses for orientating flow of a coolant fluid of the reactor along lower-adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods, the noses being arranged in the nodes of the substantially regular network in order to be positioned in a longitudinal continuation of at least some of the fuel rods and/or at least some of the guide tubes of the support skeleton.

wherein the noses project from the bottom side of the end piece and converge~~have an inner surface facing the fuel rods and an outer surface opposite the inner surface that converges~~ to be narrower than the diameter of the fuel rods in a direction that is orientated from the top side towards the bottom-outer side of the lower end piece.

Claim 25 (canceled).

Claim 26 (previously presented): The end-piece according to claim 24, wherein at least some of the noses belong to members for fixing at least one of the terminal end-pieces to one of the guide tubes of the support skeleton and fuel rods.

Claim 27 (previously presented): The end-piece according to claim 26, wherein the fixing members are screws.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The end-piece according to claim 24 further comprising:
an arrangement for laterally maintaining the lower-adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods, wherein the arrangement is arranged in the nodes of the substantially regular network.

Claim 29 (withdrawn): The end-piece according to claim 28, wherein the maintaining arrangement-maintenance housing further comprises housings for receiving the lower adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The end-piece according to claim 28, wherein the maintaining-maintenance arrangement has an arrangement for longitudinally securing the lower-adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods relative to the terminal end-piece.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The end-piece according to claim 30, wherein the end-piece comprises two components for clamping between them the lower-adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 32 (previously presented): The end-piece according to claim 24, wherein the end piece comprises an anti-debris filter.

Claim 33 (previously presented): The end-piece according to claim 31, wherein one of the components comprises an anti-debris filter.

Claim 34 (canceled).

Claim 35 (currently amended): The end-piece according to claim 2[[3]]4, wherein the end piece comprises feet for support on a lower plate of the nuclear reactor core.

Claim 36 (currently amended): A fuel assembly for a pressurized water nuclear reactor, the assembly comprising:

fuel rods, the fuel rods having an outer cladding and an upper and a lower plug and having a length and a diameter; and

a skeleton for supporting fuel rods, the fuel rods extending in a longitudinal direction and being arranged at nodes of a substantially regular network, the support skeleton comprising ~~two terminal end pieces, an upper terminal end piece and a lower terminal end piece,~~ and guide tubes that connect the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, the fuel rods being arranged longitudinally between the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, wherein the lower terminal end-piece has a top side and a bottom side, ~~the top side an inner side and an outer side, the inner side~~ facing the fuel rods and the bottom side ~~outer side~~ being opposite the top side ~~inner side~~ and has noses for orientating flow of a coolant fluid of the reactor along lower adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods, the noses being arranged in the nodes of the substantially regular network in order to be positioned in a longitudinal continuation of at least some of the fuel rods and/or at least some of the guide tubes of the support skeleton,

wherein the noses project from the bottom side of the end piece and converge ~~have an inner surface facing the fuel rods and an outer surface opposite the inner surface that converges~~ to be narrower than the diameter of the fuel rods in a direction that is orientated from the top side of the end piece towards the bottom side ~~outer side~~ of the lower end piece.

Claim 37 (currently amended): The assembly according to claim 36, wherein at least one of the end-pieces comprises an arrangement for laterally maintaining lower adjacent longitudinal ends of the fuel rods, wherein the arrangement is configured in nodes of the substantially regular network.

Claim 38 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 37, wherein the arrangement comprises housings that receive the ~~lower-adjacent longitudinal~~ ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 39 (currently amended): The assembly according to claim 37, wherein the maintaining ~~maintenance~~ arrangement is an arrangement for longitudinally securing the lower adjacent ~~longitudinal~~ ends of the fuel rods relative to the terminal end-pieces.

Claim 40 (currently amended): The assembly according to claim 39, wherein the end-piece comprises two components that clamp between them the lower-adjacent ~~longitudinal~~ ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 41 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 40, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises projections that are provided on the end-piece and rings that are provided at the lower-adjacent ~~longitudinal~~ ends of the fuel rods and that are fitted to the projections.

Claim 42 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 41, wherein that the rings comprise relief portions for abutment against one of the components.

Claim 43 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 38, wherein the lower-adjacent ~~longitudinal~~ ends of the fuel rods comprise widened feet that are clamped between the two components.

Claim 44 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 37, wherein the lower-adjacent ~~longitudinal~~ ends of the fuel rods are expansion-rolled on the end-piece.

Claim 45 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 39, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises screws that abut the end-piece and that are engaged in the lower-adjacent ~~longitudinal~~ ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 46 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 39, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement secured by snap-fitting.

Claim 47 (previously presented): The assembly according to claim 36 wherein the noses converge to a point.

Claim 48 (previously presented): The terminal end-piece according to claim 24 wherein the noses converge to a point.